

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 6 and 8-9 are pending in the above-identified patent application. By this Amendment, claims 5 and 7 are canceled and claim 8 is amended. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the remarks set forth below.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 1-4, and 9 are allowed. Because claim 8 is allowable at least for the reasons discussed below, it is respectfully submitted that the entire application is in condition for .

Objections to Claim 8

The Office Action objects to claim 8 for containing an asserted informality. Applicants believe that this objection is overcome with the above amendments to claim 8. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to claim 8 are respectfully requested.

Section 103 Rejection

The Office Action rejects claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over either of Krueger et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,666,469) taken in view of applicant's admitted prior art as depicted by Figure 14 of the instant application. This rejection is traversed as it may apply to amended claim 8.

In Krueger et al., all the gas flowing outside of membrane is subjected to flow in the bypass channel from one end thereof. In contrast, the amended claim 8 is different from Krueger et al. in the fact that part of the gas is introduced into one end of the bypass channel, and the remaining gas is subjected to flow in one end of the hollow fiber membranes.

The configuration of amended claim 8 makes it possible for water exchange to occur through the hollow fiber membranes at a portion near the outer circumference from one end, and thus, allow the water-exchange through the entire part of the hollow fiber membrane.

For at least the above reasons, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) are thus respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of the claims is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner believe anything further is desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered timely filed, Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The Commissioner is authorized to charge payment for any additional fees which may be required with respect to this paper to Counsel's Deposit Account 01-2300, **referring to client-matter number 106145-00016.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert K. Carpenter", written over a horizontal line.

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